

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system for allocating funds in pre-established accounts comprising:

a controller processor programmed:

(a) to process data;

(b) to create for each customer a customer account file; and

(c) to transfer funds from customer account files to vendors of audio and video entertainment in the form of goods and services, in response to customer command instructions,

an input device for supplying command instructions to said controller processor; and

a data storage device associated with said controller processor in which file records of said customer account files created by said controller processor are stored, including information on the amounts of funds deposited for said customer;

wherein said controller processor is programmed to process and store information in said storage device for each customer account, in response to command instructions from fund depositors, limiting how said funds may be spent on said audio and video entertainment, wherein said limit on said funds is either a limit on transaction amount or a limit according to content on the audio or video entertainment on which said funds may be spent.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising an output device, wherein said controller processor is programmed to store in the storage device information

on each fund transfer and to supply to said fund depositor through said output device said stored information on said fund transfers.

3. The system of claim 2, wherein said purchase information is automatically supplied periodically.

4. The system of claim 3, wherein said purchase information is supplied weekly or monthly.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein said customer account file comprises a primary deposit file into which the amount of funds deposited is recorded, and a secondary deposit file into which at least a portion of the deposited funds may be allocated by said controller processor for use by said customer in response to command instructions issued by said depositor, and said funds transferred from said customer account file to transferees in response to command instructions from said customers are transferred from said secondary deposit file.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein funds are deposited periodically to said customer account files.

7. The system of claim 6, wherein said funds are deposited weekly or monthly.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein said funds are deposited automatically.

9. The system of claim 1, wherein said limit on said funds is a limit on transaction amount.

10. The system of claim 9 wherein said limit on transaction amount is a periodic limit.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein said periodic limit is a weekly or monthly limit.

12. The system of claim 1, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises digitalized forms of entertainment selected from the group consisting of music recordings, music videos, video games and DVD movies.

13. The system of claim 1, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises rental video tapes.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein said limit on said funds is a content limit.

15. The system of claim 14, wherein said content limit is according to artist, genre or content rating.

16. A computer-based method for allocating funds in preestablished accounts for use by customers, comprising:

creating for each customer a customer account file containing a record of funds deposited for said customer; and

limiting how said funds in said customer account file may be spent on audio and video entertainment in the form of goods and services in response to command instructions from the fund depositor;

wherein said limit on said funds is a limit on transaction amount or a limit according to content

on the audio and video entertainment on which said funds may be spent.

17. The method of claim 16, further comprising the step of storing information on fund transfers.

18. The method of claim 17, further comprising the step of supplying to said fund depositor said information on fund transfers.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein said supplying step is performed periodically.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein said supplying step is performed weekly or monthly.

21. The method of claim 16, wherein said funds are deposited periodically.

22. The method of claim 21, wherein said funds are deposited weekly or monthly.

23. The method of claim 16, wherein said funds are deposited automatically.

24. The method of claim 16, wherein said step of creating a customer account file comprises the steps of:

creating a primary deposit file containing a record of funds deposited by said depositor for allocation to at least one customer;

creating a secondary deposit file accessible by a customer; and

transferring to said secondary deposit file in response to command instructions from said depositor at least a portion of the funds deposited in said primary deposit file, representing deposited funds for use by said customer.

25. The method of claim 16, wherein said limit on funds is a limit on transaction amount.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said limit on transaction amount is a periodic limit.

27. The method of claim 26, wherein said limit on transaction amount is a weekly or monthly limit.

28. The method of claim 16, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises digitalized forms of entertainment selected from the group consisting of music recordings, music videos, video games and DVD movies.

29. The method of claim 16, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises rental video tapes.

30. The method of claim 16, wherein said limit on said funds is a content limit.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein said content limit is according to artist, genre or content rating.

32. A system for allocating funds in pre-established accounts comprising:

a controller processor programmed:

(a) to process data;

(b) to create for each customer a customer account file;

(c) to transfer funds from customer account files to vendors of audio and video entertainment in the form of goods and services, in response to customer command instructions; and

(d) to process command instructions from depositors to transfer funds periodically to customer account files;

an input device for supplying command instructions to said controller processor; and

a data storage device associated with said controller processor in which file records of said customer account files created by said controller processor are stored, including information on the amounts of funds deposited periodically for said customers by fund depositors.

33. The system of claim 32, further comprising an output device, wherein said controller processor is programmed to store in the storage device information on each fund transfer and to supply to said fund depositor through said output device said stored information on said fund transfers.

34. The system of claim 33, wherein said purchase information is automatically supplied periodically.

35. The system of claim 32, wherein said customer account file comprises a primary deposit file into which the amount of funds deposited is recorded, and a secondary deposit file into which at least a portion of the deposited funds may be allocated by said controller processor for use by said customer in response to

command instructions issued by said depositor, and said funds transferred from said customer account file to transferees in response to command instructions from said customers are transferred from said secondary deposit file.

36. The system of claim 32, wherein funds are deposited periodically to said customer account files.

37. The system of claim 36, wherein said funds are deposited weekly or monthly.

38. The method of claim 32, wherein said funds are deposited automatically.

39. The system of claim 32, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises digitalized forms of entertainment selected from the group consisting of music recordings, music videos, video games and DVD movies.

40. The system of claim 32, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises rental video tapes.

41. A computer-based method for allocating funds in preestablished accounts for use by customers, comprising:

creating for each customer a customer account file containing a record of funds deposited for said customer for spending on audio and video entertainment in the form of goods and services; and

periodically depositing funds into customer account files in response to command instructions from the fund depositor.

42. The method of claim 41, further comprising the step of storing information on fund transfers.

43. The method of claim 42, further comprising the step of supplying to said fund depositor said information on fund transfers.

44. The method of claim 43, wherein said supplying step is performed periodically.

45. The method of claim 41, wherein said funds are deposited weekly or monthly.

46. The method of claim 41, wherein said funds are deposited automatically.

47. The method of claim 41, wherein said step of creating a customer account file comprises the steps of:

creating a primary deposit file containing a record of funds deposited by said depositor for allocation to at least one customer;

creating a secondary deposit file accessible by a customer; and

transferring to said secondary deposit file in response to command instructions from said depositor at least a portion of the funds deposited in said primary deposit file, representing deposited funds for use by said customer.

48. The method of claim 41, further comprising the step of limiting how said funds in said customer account may be spent in response to command instructions from said fund depositor, wherein said

limit on said funds is a limit on transaction amount or a limit according to content on the audio and video entertainment on which said funds may be spent.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein said limit on funds is a limit on transaction amount.

50. The method of claim 49, wherein said limit on transaction amount is a periodic limit.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein said limit on transaction amount is a weekly or monthly limit.

52. The method of claim 41, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises digitalized forms of entertainment selected from the group consisting of music recordings, music videos, video games and DVD movies.

53. The method of claim 41, wherein said audio or video entertainment comprises rental video tapes.

54. The method of claim 48, wherein said limit on said funds is a content limit.

55. The method of claim 54, wherein said content limit is according to artist, genre or content rating.